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A lineup to rock a pop-music-lover's world.

From cruise to Creem

I'm a claustrophobe prone to seasickness, so spending a week trapped on a giant floating bathtub has never been on top of my wish list. Still, I'm willing to give it a try on two conditions: if alt-country all-stars Lyle Lovett, Emmylou Harris, Patty Griffin, John Hiatt, Buddy Miller and Josh Rouse come along and bring their guitars, and the boat leaves from Miami and stops in Cozumel, Grand Cayman and Jamaica. I think I can bring enough Dramamine to handle that. Rooms aboard the **Cayamo Music Cruise** start at $749, based on double occupancy. I'll pay to get myself to Miami. www.cayamo.com. **(1)**

I love my CDs, but the iPod convenience factor increasingly makes it a go-to device at home as well as on the move. So to make those compressed music files sound as good as they possibly can, I'm eyeballing the **Audio Music Cocoon MC4 iPod Dock** from the Reading, England, audiophile company Roth Audio. It uses old fashioned tube amp technology, and will make my living room look like Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory. And it works not only with an iPod, but also with CD players, laptops or any other audio device. $749.99 on amazon.com. **(2)**

Hag: The Studio Recordings, 1968-1976 The Bear Family record label in Germany has long been the leading and most thorough reissue company in the world when it comes to lovingly repackaging classic American roots music. The six-CD Merle Haggard set **Hag: The Studio Recordings, 1968-1976** captures the incomparable country great in his gloriously contradictory prime, back when he scored 15 consecutive No. 1 hits, and confused his audience with the anti-hippie goof "Okie From Muskogee" and the interracial romance "Irma Jackson." Includes 165 songs, more than 8 hours of music, and a 140-page book, for a mere 125.88 euros. Available from www.bear-family.de

I've been an XM subscriber for about four years, but my old Delphi car unit is busted, so it's time for an upgrade. The **Pioneer Inno Portable XM Satellite Radio** is an iPod-size device that looks pretty cool to me, with a built-in antenna and the crucial TiVo-like function that lets you press "record" when a song comes on that grabs you. It holds 50 hours of recorded programming, and can store MP3s. I need it to satisfy my Frank's Place, Bob Dylan Theme Time Radio Hour, and Major League Baseball jonesses. $169.97 on Amazon, plus $12.95 per month XM subscription fee. **(3)**

The choice coffee-table book **Creem: America's Only Rock 'N' Roll Magazine**, by Robert Matheu and Brian J. Bowe, chronicles the Detroit rock magazine that combined irreverent attitude with excellent music journalism, featuring writers such as Lester Bangs, Richard Meltzer, Nick Tosches, Jaan Uhelszki and Cameron Crowe. From the cheeky "Creem's Profiles," Boy Howdy beer ads, and "Stars Cars" photo features to in-depth profiles of the MC5 and the Pretenders, Creem makes the '70s look like rock's real glory decade. $29.95. **(4)**

— *Dan DeLuca, pop music critic*

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On the Cover

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To Our Readers

The regular Image columns and features will return next Sunday.

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These goodies will push any gamer's buttons.

Let's get serious about playtime

Many gamers like myself are getting up in years. The first generation of Pong players are easily 35+ now, own multiple game consoles, a zillion games, and a nice PC. In other words, we got cash. That's why I am pulling out some of the bigger, more outrageous gifts this year. When it comes to playing, I ain't playin'?

Your old-school passion will never be doubted with the three-sided **Dreamcade 2.0 Cocktail Arcade cabinet**. Three joysticks, a trackball, a glass-covered 21-inch screen as the table top, and more than 145 classic games from developers including Atari, Midway and Namco. The sum of those parts means years of pleasure to offset any RSI injuries or arthritis that may come your way battling your friends. Plus, it's a PC-based machine; hence, if '80s bleeps and blips aren't good enough for you, you can add your own music. Available at www.dreamarcades.com, $1,899 (+S&H). **(1)**

Some of my fondest gaming memories as a kid are sitting in a secondhand La-Z-Boy, playing the Intellivision console. My dad had rigged the thing to play through his quadraphonic sound system and life was good.

Fast-forward 30 years and witness the **Renegade Game Chair**, a throne that puts all games and consoles under its thumb. The full-fledged recliner sports 12 vibrating motors, speakers built into the headrest, and the guarantee of many long nights of drool-dripping sensations with a massage mode as well. Personally, this thing scares me. It is like some kind of portal to an ultimate gaming dimension from which you may never extricate yourself.

Available at www.ultimategamechair.com for $299, but word on the street says you can find them at Sam's Club at way below the MSRP. **(2)**

The musical game series Guitar Hero has surpassed all expectations. Who could have known a game that requires a fairly expensive guitar controller would be so popular?! Heck, Guitar Hero III, which hit shelves a couple of weeks ago, made $115 million its first week.

That is why these custom-painted **Limited Edition AG RiffMaster Guitar Controllers** will sell, and sell well. The 17 faux-gits have some of the heaviest metal bands ever painted on them. Kiss, Lynyrd Skynyrd, Megadeth, Ozzy and Pantera designs are available. Imagine showing up at a Guitar Hero competition with one of those bad boys. At www.artguitar.com. $399.**(3)**

Of course the Nintendo Wii will be on everyone's list, but chances of scoring one will be slim. The **Sony PlayStation 3** isn't a substitute, but the console is finally starting to get some legs with a more affordable gaming system. Simply put, it is an excellent choice this holiday season.

Better PS3 games are finally starting to hit shelves with more frequency, the Sony online store is beginning to offer more downloadable games, and at $399, this is the cheapest Blu-ray player on the market. If you are into the high-definition movies (but not old PS2 games, as this new system won't play them), this version of the PS3 is really a no-brainer.

— *Rob Watson, "Bare Knuckles" columnist*

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